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## Ænon near to Salim.

BY PROF. WM. ARNOLD STEVENS.

THERE is perhaps no lost Biblical site, unless it be "Bethany beyond Jordan," that the student of the Gospel narrative is now so eager to recover, as the Ænon of John iii. 23. Here John the Baptist appears for the last time on the public arena of history. Here he delivers his last recorded testimony to the Messiah, unsurpassed in moral sublimity by any utterance that has since fallen from human lips. Neither Ænon nor Salim occurs elsewhere in the New Testament; whether either is mentioned in the Old Testament remains to be ascertained. Both names have wandered like disembodied spirits in search of their proper habitat. They have traversed Palestine from south to north, on both sides of the Jordan, and sometimes have settled down in very "dry places."

That the Greek *Ἀϊών* represents an Aramaic derivative of 'Ain, "spring," either an intensive or a plural (see Grimm, *Clavis N. T.*), is scarcely to be questioned. It is therefore a descriptive local name, equivalent to "the Springs." So J. Lightfoot: "I should rather take Ænon for the name of some large and spacious compass of ground, full of fresh springs and waters, than for any one particular town, river, or city" (see *Harmony of the Four Evangelists*, on John iii. 23). Its situation is only defined as that of the well-known, or at least the better known, Salim. The latter name, it is to be noted, is an unexplained exception to current Greek usage as to names of towns; it is not feminine (though so given in Robinson's *Lexicon*; in Grimm's *Clavis* the question of gender remains unnoticed), but either masculine or neuter.

The writer has been led, while treating of the life of Christ, in the classroom, to a frequent examination of the arguments *pro* and *con* for each of the proposed sites. From data supplied by the Gospel narrative itself, he had been inclined to seek the locality in central rather than southern Palestine, and that, either in the valley of the Jordan, south of Beisân, or, following Robinson, in the neighborhood of Sâlim, east of Nâblous. A three or four months' tour in Palestine,

early in 1883, afforded an opportunity to visit the Ghôr at Beisân, as well as the tract lying north and east of Nâblous. The result of a personal examination of the ground was to convince him of the general correctness of Robinson's identification (adopted also by Capt. Conder) as against any other of the numerous proposed sites. Capt. Conder attempts no definite localization, but seems inclined to place Ænon as near Khûrbet 'Ainûn as the course of the Fâr'ah stream will allow. It is perhaps possible to determine the site still more precisely. The object of this paper is in part to advocate Robinson's view, and also to direct special attention to the western end of the Wâdy Beidân, three or four miles north of Sâlim, as the probable site of the New Testament Ænon. First a glance at

### *Leading Opinions Hitherto.*

1. *In the Ghôr, South of Beisân.* — Fourth century tradition placed both Ænon and Salim eight Roman miles to the south of Scythopolis, and not far from the Jordan ("juxta Jordanem"). See Jerome (*Onomasticon*, articles *Ænon* and *Salim*). The latter was still pointed out, a village called Salumias. Jerome, in opposition to the then prevailing view, also considered this to have been the royal residence of Melchizedek. Epiphanius considered it to have been the Salem near Shechem.<sup>1</sup>

Drs. Robinson and Smith, who together explored that part of the Ghôr in 1852, found no trace of ruins, or of either name except the Wely or shrine of a Sheikh Sâlim at the foot of Tell Ridghah, less than two miles from the stream of the Jordan. The industrious

<sup>1</sup> "Ænon juxta Salim, ubi baptizabat Joannes, sicut in Evangelio cata Joannem scriptum est (iii. 23): et ostenditur nunc usque locus in octavo lapide Scythopoleos ad meridiem juxta Salim et Jordanem" (Jerome, *Migne Patrol. Lat.*, vol. 23, tom. iii. 163).

"Sichem et Salem, quæ (Latine et Græce) Sicima vocata est, civitas Jacob, nunc deserta. Ostenditur autem locus in suburbanis Neapoleos juxta sepulcrum Joseph," etc. (*ibid.*, 266).

"Salem, civitas Sicimorum, quæ est Sichem; sed et alia villa ostenditur usque in præsentem diem (juxta Æliam contra occidentalem plagam hoc nomine; in octavo quoque lapide a Scythopoli in campo vicus Salumias appellatur; Josephus vero Salem esse affirmat in qua regnavit Melchisedec, quæ postea dicta est Solyma, et ad extremum, Hierosolymæ nomen accepit" (*ibid.*, 267).

"... Oppidum juxta Scythopolim, quod usque hodie appellatur Salem, et ostenditur ibi palatium Melchisedec, ex magnitudine ruinarum veteris operis ostendens magnificentiam" (*ibid.*, vol. 22, tom. i. 445).

(See also Reland, *Palæstina*, p. 721.)

inquiries of Tyrwhitt Drake and Capt. Conder were equally unsatisfactory. See report of Drake (*P. E. F. Quarterly*, 1875, p. 32) : "Ænon and Salim have been identified by Van de Velde as Bir Sâlim and Sheikh Sâlim. Inquiries of the Arabs and the Fellahin in the above district resulted in not a man of them ever having heard of either of the places."

Among the moderns who more or less confidently adopt this site are Van de Velde, Greswell, Andrews (*Life of Our Lord*), Edersheim (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, i. 393), Pressel (in Herzog's *Encyclopädie*, art. "Salim"; also Güder, art. "Johannes der Taüfer"), Caspari (*Chronologisch-geog. Einleitung*, § 87), Ellicott (*Life of Christ*, p. 126, note, Amer. ed.), Grove (Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, art. "Salim"), Hackett (*ibid.*, Amer. ed., art. "Ænon").

Eusebius and Jerome appear simply to have reported current tradition, and, as the citations in the accompanying note show, unlinked with any confirmatory historical facts. It is a manifest objection to the correctness of the tradition, that it places Ænon so near to the Jordan. The site identified by Van de Velde as Salim is but a little over a mile from the river, and the springs of the proposed Ænon not much farther. Now a spot within two or three miles at most from the river Jordan would scarcely call for special description as a place of "much water," this fact being evidently inserted by the evangelist to designate it as an appropriate locality for the administration of baptism. Considering that the Jordan valley had been the scene of the Baptist's public ministry for a year or more, the annexed reason for the choice of Ænon at the time seems plainly to indicate that it was *not* in the Jordan valley, at least in close proximity to the river itself. To add "for there was much water there" were quite superfluous, if John was still within a few minutes' walk of the river.

2. The majority of modern expositors take us to *Southern Judea*, chiefly supporting their opinion by the similarity of the two names with the *Ain* and *Shilhim* of Josh. xv. 32 : **ושלחם ועין**. In Josh. xix. 7 *Ain* again occurs. The *En*- of *En-Rimmon*, in Neh. xi. 29, is supposed to be the same. (See Wieseler *Chron. Synopse der vier Evv.*, p. 247.) It is also urged : "The Evangelist indicates plainly enough that his Ænon is to be looked for in Judea; for, after having said (iii. 22) that Jesus and his disciples had baptized in the land of Judea (*ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ γῇ*), he immediately proceeds *ἦν δὲ καὶ Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων ἐν Αἰνὼν ἐγγὺς τοῦ Σαλείμ*. Now it is certainly most natural to refer the comparison, here indicated by *καί*, not merely to the act of baptizing, but of baptizing in the land of Judea; there was no need of

this clause to inform us that John baptized." (*Ibid.*, Eng. Tr., p. 245.) So Meyer, briefly, that Ænon "in Judæa, nicht in Samarien, gelegen haben muss." But this is to pervert entirely the writer's *καί* in iii. 23. It is intended to indicate, not identity of locality, but the simultaneousness of these two ministries at this junction of the Gospel history. John was still engaged in baptizing,—this being still further explained in verse 24,—"for John was not yet cast into prison." The tenor of the passage is rather to distinguish the two locations apart than to identify the latter as belonging to the same region. Among those who adopt the above identification are Alford, Godet, Pressensé (*Jesus Christ*, Eng. Tr., p. 227; in his note he favors an etymology which he is scarcely justifiable in attributing to Wieseler, namely, that Ænon is a contraction (!) from En-Rimmon), Milligan and Moulton (*Popular Commentary on the N. T.*; the parenthetical statement that Shilhim of Josh. xv. 32 is "translated Salem in the LXX," gives an incorrect impression of the fact).

The resemblance of a **שִׁלְחִים** (Shilchîm; in codex Alex. of the LXX **Σελεύμ**), with an *Ain* near it, to the **Σαλεύμ** of the text, is but a slender support for this view.<sup>1</sup> Against it is the drift of the Evangelist's narrative (according to the interpretation given above), the absence of historical or geographical data to establish it, and, finally, the absence of an abundance of water in any site to which the names given in Joshua can probably be assigned.

3. *East of the Jordan.*—This embraces a third class of conjectures. Dr. Lightfoot was at first inclined to locate Ænon in Galilee (see *Harmony of the Gospels*, part iii., published in 1650), but in his *Chorographical Inquiry*, dated 1671, he withdrew that opinion, and favored the hypothesis of an Ænon in Southern Peræa, believing that "we must look for it either in Galilee or Peræa," for the reason that it was about this time that John was seized by Herod, and that he must, accordingly, have been baptizing at some point within Herod's dominions. The erudite Lampe argues at length to the same effect, that the scene of John's closing ministry was, in all probability, not remote from the Peræan capital of Herod Antipas, the city Julias, or from Machærus, the fortress of John's captivity.

Among recent writers, Edersheim is disposed to entertain favorably the view "that Ænon, near Salim, was actually within the dominions

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<sup>1</sup> Wieseler considers *Αἰνών* in Josh. xv. 61 (according to the codex Vat. *μαδων*) to be the same place as the *Αἰν* in v. 32 (codex Alex.). It is difficult to see on what ground this assumption rests.

of Herod," and, "in that case, may even have been in Peræa itself" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, i., p. 657).

But against this hypothesis the words addressed to John by his disciples seem decisive: "he that was with thee beyond Jordan," etc. (John iii. 26). For, although the phrase "beyond Jordan" is certainly not to be taken in every case as denoting *east of* the river, it can scarcely be otherwise understood in the present instance. The *first* scene of the Baptist's activity, as described in the fourth Gospel, is "Bethany beyond Jordan" (i. 28). In describing the transactions of scene *second*, it is inconceivable that the writer should have used the phrase "beyond Jordan" in a reverse and a rare sense, and without a glimpse of a reason for so doing.

4. 'Ain Fârah (or 'Ain Wâdy Fârah) near Jerusalem. — This identification of Ænon, by Dr. Barclay, with one of the headsprings of the Wâdy Kelt, would scarcely detain us, except for its adoption by Mr. Trelawney Saunders, who has confidently inserted it in his New Testament Map of Western Palestine, recently constructed from the plates of the Palestine Exploration Fund. The following is the description of the spring as given in the *P. E. F. Memoirs*, vol. iii., p. 170: "'Ain Fârah is a very fine spring, surrounded with a thick growth of reeds and oleander bushes. Small fish have been found in the water." It is interesting to compare with this the glowing description and the illustrative wood-cut in Dr. Barclay's *City of the Great King* (see pp. 558–569). It lies equally distant from 'Anâta (Anathoth) and Jeba (Geba), about three and one-half miles to the east, in the bed of a precipitous ravine. I was not myself fortunate enough to see the spring, though on two different occasions, while exploring the routes from Jericho to Bethel and Ai, I was a mile or two above the spot, among the steep gorges that converge towards it; and again, several miles below it, I climbed down into the bed of the wâdy, to which, for a part of the year, it furnishes a visible stream.<sup>1</sup>

The chief argument for the identification is the name Suleim, belonging to a small wâdy south of Anathoth. This similarity of name, and the existence of a copious spring in the neighborhood, constitute an argument certainly entitled to a hearing, but hardly sufficient to offset two historical improbabilities: first, that the Baptist should have

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<sup>1</sup> The volume of water is not sufficient to supply the channel below throughout the year. If the reader will take the trouble to consult the large map of the Pal. Ex. Fund, he will see that the permanent stream of the Wâdy Kelt does not begin at 'Ain Fârah, but several miles lower down, at 'Ain el Kelt.

been prosecuting his mission at this late period so near Jerusalem, the central seat of the opposition on the part of the Pharisees and the hierarchy ; second, that he should have chosen this sterile tract, amid a tangle of precipitous ravines, as a suitable place for a multitude to gather about him and receive baptism.

It is perhaps needless to add to the preceding Sepp's conjecture of Beit 'Ainûn, near Hebron (see his chapter on "Der Täufer at Ænon," *Leben Jesu Christi*) ; Lightfoot's, referred to above, that Salim lay in Galilee, in the territory of Issachar ; and others. Dr. Thomson, in his recent *Central Palestine and Phœnicia*, remarks, p. 153 : "Both Ænon and Salim, therefore, must be classed with Biblical sites not yet identified."

5. *Near Sâlim, east of Nâblous.* — Robinson was the first to identify this village with the Σαλείμ of John's Gospel (*Researches*, iii. 333), leaving the suggestion, however, as a mere hypothesis, from the absence of sufficiently confirmatory data. He remarks upon the ruin 'Ainûn, which he had visited, situated on a small tell, about seven miles north-east of Sâlim, but finding "no Salim near, nor a drop of water," passes it by without pausing to account for this capital specimen of *lucus a non* ; evidently, he attached but little importance to the name for the purpose of fixing more precisely the site for which he was seeking. Sâlim lies on the southern slope of the mountain Neby Belân, about four miles from Nâblous, and two and one-half miles due east from Jacob's Well. "It is a small village resembling the rest, but evidently ancient, having rock-cut tombs, cisterns, and a tank. Olive trees surround it ; on the north are two springs, about three-quarters of a mile from the village" (*P. E. F. Memoirs*, vol. ii., p. 230). "In the Samaritan Chronicle it is called Salem the Great, and the Samaritans understand it to be mentioned in Gen. xxxiii. 18. Sâlim is also possibly the Caphar Salama of I. Macc. vii. 31, which seems to have been in Samaria" (*ibid.*).

Robinson's identification of this Sâlim with that of John iii. 23 has been adopted by many recent authorities. See Conder's *Tent Work in Palestine*, chap. iii., also the *Memoirs*, cited above, and *Hand-book of the Bible*, p. 320 ; Rowland (art. "Salim," *Imperial Bible Dict.*) ; Porter (in Murray's *Handbook for Syria and Palestine*) ; Major Wilson (*Bible Educator*, vol. iv., p. 121).

As to Ænon, Conder seems disposed to locate it as near as possible to Khurbet 'Ainûn, but is content to leave it somewhere in the broad open valley of the upper Fâr'ah, between Salim and 'Ainûn. Porter (*Hand-book*, p. 340) places it on the northern fork of the Fâr'ah at or

near Burj Fâr'ah. McGarvey (*Lands of the Bible*, p. 293) found to his view a still more suitable location about four miles below the junction of the two branches of the stream.

*Wâdy Beidân.*

The Fâr'ah is the principal western affluent of the Jordan. It is a narrow, deep valley, flanked by parallel mountain ranges, running at first due south-east, then more to the south, till it reaches the Ghôr. The distance from the northern headsprings at Burj Fâr'ah to the Jordan, following the general line of its course, is about twenty miles. The stream itself is a slender thread banked by bluffs, steep, but grassy and not precipitous; at several points I judged them one hundred feet high or more. Above them the valley expands to the width of from one to two miles. The opposite ridges of the two mountain ranges are stated by Conder to be about four miles apart. In this extensive tract, though fertile and well watered, there is not a single village. It is held by the Mesa'ayd, a tribe of nomadic Arabs. They numbered in 1874, according to the report of Tyrwhitt Drake, one hundred and ten tents, and one hundred and eighty men.

In Biblical history this valley is known only as a thoroughfare. "It was up this valley that Jacob drove his flocks and herds from Succoth to Shalem near Shechem. It was along the banks of its stream that the 'garments and vessels' of the hosts of Benhadad were strewn as far as Jordan" (Conder, *Tent Work*, i. 91).

The situation and course of the Wâdy Beidân, which forms the southern branch of the Fâr'ah, will be seen by a glance at the large map of the Palestine Exploration Fund. At its beginning, it is a deep slit in the limestone strata between Ebal and Neby Belân; in the rainy season it drains the plain between Jacob's Well and Sâlim, but most of the year is a dry gully. Starting from the springs called Râs el Fâr'ah, it is about two miles in length, running almost due east till it joins the northern branch of the Fâr'ah. The writer's entrance into the valley was from the village of 'Askar, where he had encamped the previous day, April 20. The path follows nearly the ancient road to Damascus, *via* Scythopolis and Gadara. It skirts the base of Mt. Ebal, a little above the level of the plain of Sâlim, and, in the course of half an hour's riding, descends rapidly alongside of the gully. Our guide, a man from 'Askar, called the gully Wâdy Ibrîd. It is the southernmost branchlet, referred to above, of the Wâdy Beidân, which latter name the men of whom we made inquiry applied only to the lower portion, where the water supply is perennial. The hills on either side



as we descend are treeless ; scarcely a shrub is seen for half an hour, except a few rows of olives on our right across the gorge. The path is deeply worn into the white marl, and worms its way among the softer portions in so crooked a fashion as to make rapid riding an impossibility. The gorge narrows and deepens ; the steep mountain wall on the right is Neby Belân, rising to the height of nearly two thousand feet above us. Between the path and Neby Belân is the deeply cut torrent-bed down among the rocks, edged on the side next to us with uptilted strata of dark, nummulitic limestone, shooting up from the gorge in strikingly picturesque serrated masses. The whole pass must always have formed a magnificent natural gateway to Shechem from the east.

In less than an hour after leaving 'Ain 'Askar we are at 'Ain es Subiân, the southernmost of the large springs that feed the Fâr'ah. Turning now a little to the left, in a few minutes more we descend abruptly into another ravine, at the foot of the Mt. Ebal group. Here we are at the proper beginning of the Wâdy Beidân, — the Râs el Fâr'ah springs, which feed with perennial abundance the southern fork of the Fâr'ah stream. Fountains are bursting forth from the rocks on either side, and a mountain brook is plunging downward in cascades and broken streams to the lower bed of the Wady. The road, instead of following the water-course, crosses it, and, continuing northward to Tûbâs, traverses the triangular terrace which separates the two branches of the Fâr'ah.

This rocky glen of fountains may well detain the traveller a moment. Within the space of half a mile are numberless springs ; the names of several of the larger are given on the Survey map. No other spot in Palestine, south of the sources of the Jordan at Bânias or Tell el Kâdy, so well deserves the name of "The Springs." There are four overshot flour mills within a few rods of one another ; lower down, in the course of two miles, are six or seven others. Some of the latter bring their water through aqueducts of solid masonry, others by a mill-race carried down to the terminus of the Wady. Other little canals are drawn off on either side for the purposes of irrigation. The rich green of grass, planted grain, and dense shrubbery, offers to the eye a most refreshing contrast with the sterile chalk and limestone slopes we have just traversed. One of the largest of the mills is at the inflow of the little rivulet from 'Ain es Subiân. From this point the Wâdy Beidân extends for nearly two miles to its junction with the Fâr'ah ; in places it is from a quarter to half a mile in width, enclosed between the higher terraces of the valley, and lying about two thousand feet below the

adjoining Neby Belân. The traveller will find few spots in Syria so beautiful as this glen in the wild luxuriance of its tropical foliage. Some gardens and enclosures of cultivated trees are owned, we were told, in Nâblous and Tulluza, as are also the neighboring mills. At the water's edge were thickets of oleander, then in full bloom; within enclosures were the walnut, mulberry, olive, fig, and in great abundance that most beautiful tree of the orient, the pomegranate, just blossoming into gorgeous crimson.

The stream is swift, winding little, but broadens here and there into pools of considerable depth. The men at the mills said large fish were caught in them, and sold in the market at Nâblous; I saw none longer than seven or eight inches. Of the depth of the water I attempted only an approximate measurement, by hiring one of the Fellâhin, who was fishing, to go with us, and wade back and forth through the pools. The largest was near the upper end of the glen, and in this the water reached about to his armpits. As compared with the northern branch of the Fâr'ah stream, this branch appears to be considerably the larger; the volume of water at the junction was evidently much greater. With this opinion accords the fact that the natives have given the name Râs el Fâr'ah (head of the Fâr'ah) to the southern group of springs.

### *Proofs of the Identification.*

*Near the Western End of the Wâdy Beiddân.*—In favor of thus locating Ænon upon the future New Testament Maps of Palestine are the following considerations: they apply for the most part to any site in the upper Fâr'ah, but become still more significant and conclusive, assuming the definite locality that has just been described.

1. *It is ἐγγὺς τοῦ Σαλείμ.*—Now it must be admitted that we cannot yet identify this Salim with certainty; but recent geography and early tradition are at one, at least so far as to look for it in or on the border of Samaria. If the Shalem of Gen. xxxiii. 18 be the name of a city, it is then by all means probable that John refers to that ancient and well-known Biblical site. Granting it is not, but merely an adjective, "safe," still the Septuagint is in evidence that there was a Salem (Σαλήμ) here in the neighborhood of Shechem; and that to the Evangelist and his readers, familiar as they were with that version, it was known as the city by which Jacob encamped on his arrival from Padan Aram.

The objection perhaps occurs to the reader: if Ænon was situated in the valley so near the famous Samaritan capital, why

should the Evangelist not describe its situation accordingly? Why is it not "near to Shechem," the better-known city, instead of "near to Salim," especially considering that he wrote at a distance from Palestine, and for readers, to a great extent, unfamiliar with its geography? The answer that at once suggests itself is that the latter may have been its usual designation in Palestine itself, where it was to be distinguished from other Ænons. Furthermore, the Wâdy Beidân is, as described above, the natural appendage to the plain which is still often called the "plain of Salim,"<sup>1</sup> whereas it is some five miles in a direct line from Nâblous, and to the traveller much further, because he must follow the road around Mt. Ebal.

That the Sâlim east of Nâblous has had a continuous existence from the New Testament period seems still more likely from the fact that the Samaritan Chronicle, in its list of twenty-two towns, where the high priests who succeeded Tobiah resided, mentions, first in order, *Salem* (in the Arabic version, *Salim*) *the Great* (Neubauer's Sam. Chron., cited by Conder, Pal. Ex. Fund *Special Papers*, p. 230). It was probably, therefore, the chief and well-known place of that name at the time of John's writing.

2. No one spot in all western Palestine that could possibly be named as the site of Ænon is so well entitled to be designated "The Springs." The Wâdy Beidân is emphatically a place of "much water" (πολλὰ ὕδατα). Its closely-clustered group of springs would give the name to the valley, not merely from the ample supply of

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<sup>1</sup> May this not furnish the clue to the gender of Σαλείμ? The permanence of the name renders it more than probable that the northern end of the plain or valley, often called the Mûkhna, anciently bore the name of the town overlooking it; ὁ Σαλείμ may have come to be the name of the plain (as ὁ Σάρων, of the plain of Sharon), it being a tract then threaded and crossed by several of the most important roads in Palestine.

Or the article may be neuter, the name belonging, at a still earlier date, to the mountain. Every traveller who has approached Nâblous from the north-east, south, or east, will recall the white wely of Neby Belân as the most conspicuous land-mark of the region. It crests the mountain-peak, on the southern slope of which lies the village of Sâlim. It is the local shrine, as I found on inquiry, to which the inhabitants of Sâlim and the two adjacent villages most frequently resort. One can hardly doubt that it is one of the Palestinian "high places" of very ancient sanctity, and it may itself have borne the name Σαλείμ. In that case, whether itself anterior to the town-name or not, the name might well have been τὸ Σαλείμ. On this latter supposition it would be still more natural for an Ænon situated in the Wâdy Beidân to be described as "near to Salim," since one who is in the valley seems to see the summits of the mountain almost immediately above him.

water for use, but as a conspicuous feature of the landscape. The traveller in ancient times as now must have taken with him a vivid picture of the verdant foliage and white cascades seen below him in the rocky gorge.

3. *Proximity of the name 'Ainûn.*—This is a ruined village, “apparently modern, standing on a small hillock” (see *P. E. F. Memoirs*, vol. ii., p. 234). It is described by Robinson, and also by Guérin. The site is about five miles north-east of the springs of the Beidân. “There is only one other place of the name in Palestine,” says Conder (*Tent Work*, i., p. 92), “Beit 'Ainûn, near Hebron; but this is a place which has no very fine supply of water, and no Salem near it. On the other hand, there are many other Salems all over Palestine, but none of them have an Ænon near them.” It must be conceded that the finding of comparatively modern village-ruins with the name 'Ainûn, on a site so destitute of water as quite to belie the name, besides being distant some seven miles from Sâlim, over two intervening mountain-ranges, is not at first sight a promising re-enforcement to the argument. But the mere existence of this name in the region of the ancient Salim is a fact not to be ignored. Further, the very fact of its inappropriateness on its present site suggests the conjecture that it is a comparatively modern transfer from some earlier site in the neighborhood, nearer to the springs in the bed of the Fâr'ah. Such a transfer of an ancient name to a neighboring site (compare, for instance, the modern Sûrafend, the ancient Sarepta, or Zarephath) is sufficiently common to make it a creditable supposition in the present case.

4. *It fully satisfies the conditions imposed by the gospel narrative.*—John's work was nearly ended; our Lord had not yet left Judea to enter upon his ministry in Galilee. For not far from a year and a half John had been fulfilling his mission,—first in the lower Jordan valley, afterwards moving to the north. Between himself and the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem, the relation was one of recognized and avowed hostility. That the latter exerted themselves to diminish his influence and to hinder his public ministry, we can hardly doubt. It was but natural for John to withdraw from the region of Jerusalem and the districts most accessible to Pharasaic and priestly influence. The Wâdy Beidân, at the head of the Fâr'ah valley, was quite suitable for his purpose. Here was water for baptizing; space and water for the numbers who gathered about him, though at this period there were probably no such immense multitudes as at first. Two great thoroughfares converged just at the head of the valley,—that from Damascus

and the north, leading into central and southern Palestine, and that from Peræa and the Jordan valley. Other roads came in from the west, at Shechem. Thus, the site was public and accessible.

Another point is to be considered. The forerunner may have wished to avoid molestation on the part of Herod Antipas as well as from the Jewish hierarchy. Whether he had already aroused the Tetrarch's hostility by rebuking his connection with Herodias, we cannot certainly know; but it is not improbable. It is plain, however, from Josephus, whose account rather supplements than contradicts the gospel history, that Herod had long been disturbed by the popular uprising caused by the preaching of John; this fact of itself would incline the Baptist to select a situation for this stage of his work outside of Herod's dominions.

"But it is difficult to believe," Dr. Andrews objects (in his invaluable *Life of Our Lord*, p. 156), "that John, the preacher of the Law, could have entered Samaria to baptize, when, at a later period, the Lord forbade the Twelve to preach in any of its cities (Matt. x. 5)."

Similarly Godet asks: "How should John have settled among the Samaritans? How would the multitude have followed him to the midst of this hostile people?" Weiss asserts positively: "It is in the nature of the case impossible that he had taken up his station in Samaria" (*Leben Jesu*, vol. ii., p. 408, note).<sup>1</sup>

But, we ask, why should John abstain from occupying a Samaritan neighborhood? Known to the Samaritans to be under ban of the Jewish hierarchy, he would be all the more welcome. He was not so much the preacher of the Law, as the herald of the Messiah; and the Samaritans, too, were awaiting a Messiah. Again, that John was stationed within the Samaritan limits does not imply that he came with a special mission to the Samaritans. It is not as if he entered a Samari-

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<sup>1</sup> I give the note in full. It illustrates, particularly the last remark, which I have put in italics, a tendency on the part of the distinguished author (it would be easy to add other examples) to neglect facts of geography and objective history that one would suppose easily accessible to him.

"Das Joh. iii. 23 genannte Ænon bei Salem, wo er taufte, ist uns gänzlich unbekannt; aber die Angaben der Kirchenväter weisen hoch in den Norden hinauf.

"Die gangbare Vorstellung, dass auch Johannes noch in Judäa wirkte, ist nach den Andeutungen unseres Evangelisten ganz unwahrscheinlich; dass er in Samaria seinen Standort nahm, ist von vorn herein unmöglich; so bleibt nur das galiläische oder peräische Gebiet übrig. Uebrigens schliesst die Bemerkung, dass der Ort wasserreich war, keineswegs aus, dass derselbe im Jordantal lag, da der Jordan schwerlich überall tief genug war, um darin zu taufen."

tan community. To cross the vaguely-drawn boundary of Samaria involved no trespass or assumption of privilege, as would be the case in entering a territory of a European state or province. Particularly in the case of this ill-defined province, with its mixture of races, we are not to suppose that the Samaritans either actually occupied, or had jurisdiction over all the tracts between their towns. In ancient or in modern Palestine there was a constant interpenetration and intermingling of populations within very limited districts. An open-air encampment of a Jewish prophet for preaching and baptizing at the head of the Fâr'ah valley, might be *in Samaria* without trespassing upon a Samaritan community, or breaking down in any way the barrier between the two peoples. Our Lord, indeed, forbade the Twelve, at the time when he sent them forth during the imprisonment of John the Baptist, to enter into "any city of the Samaritans." But they were not forbidden to traverse their territory. He himself is mentioned as being among the Samaritans on two separate occasions during the last period of his ministry, the five or six months preceding his crucifixion (Luke ix. 51 *sq.*, xvii. 11 *sq.*). Lange, indeed, supposes that a considerable part of this period was spent in the Samaritan borders.

Far too much stress has been laid in the interpretation of the gospel narrative on the hostility and supposed non-intercourse between Jews and Samaritans. "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans," — the Evangelist's annotation to the question of the woman of Samaria, — obviously means "no needless, friendly, or familiar intercourse with them." What Edersheim, a high authority on a question of this sort, says of Christ, applies also in measure to John the Baptist. "Such prejudices in regard to Samaria, as those which affected the ordinary Judean devotee, would, of course, not influence the conduct of Jesus. But great as these undoubtedly were, they have been unduly exaggerated by modern writers, misled by one-sided quotations from Rabbinical works" (*Jesus the Messiah*, i., p. 295). Also: "Samaria appears [*i.e.*, in the Rabbis] merely as a strip intervening between Judea and Galilee, being the land of the Cuthæans. Nevertheless, it was not regarded like heathen lands, but pronounced clean" (p. 398). Again, of the Samaritans: "They were not treated as heathen, and their land, their springs, baths, houses, and roads were declared clean" (p. 400).

One more point specially concerns the broader interpretation of the gospel narrative, and this will conclude the discussion. Our Lord's two days' ministry in Sychar is unique. In the whole history it has

no parallel. Among the Samaritans of this city he found a large, intelligent faith, such as met him nowhere else. He seems to have wrought no miracles ; he was not even challenged to produce "a sign out of heaven" ; faith followed the spoken word. Whence this faith, this intelligence? Who had instructed this people? Who had sown the seed that now sprang up into this white harvest? If the Baptist had been for some time preaching in the immediate neighborhood, within five miles distance, the question is answered. "Others had labored," as our Lord at the time reminds his disciples. Here in a remarkable manner John had fulfilled his prophetic mission, and, in the words of the angel, had made ready for his Lord "a prepared people."